ISSN 0712-7774

CEREBUS

JAKA'S STORY 13

126
SEP

$2.00 USA • $2.50 CANADA • £1 UK

**'No artist
desires to prove
anything.'**

Oscar Wilde
preface
to "Picture of
Dorian Gray"

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

I promised some time ago that I would refrain from using this space for "Attention K-Mart Shoppers" announcements.

Seemingly-desperate times call for seemingly-desperate measures. Aardvark-Vanaheim is being hurled bodily from the building in which it has resided for more than ten years. The building has been purchased (by those wacky guys at Canada Trust) and is due to be torn down. Since we know we are unable to draw issue 300 in our present location, we would like very much to move to a place where we *can* draw issue 300. The only way to make sure of that is (you guessed it, campers) to *buy* a place to draw issue 300. I'll spare you Dave the Misanthrope in the Land of Real Estate and skip to the part where you come in (you're welcome).

To help pay for the house, we intend to do something Just For the Bucks. I feel you have a right to know that. It is over-priced. It is pure re-packaging. Large-paper editions of *Jaka's Story;* 3 books reproducing a) Prologue & Pogrom's Progress b) The Poet c) Mystery Achievement, white paper (acid-free) over-size pages (somewhere between the original art size and the printed size: closer to the original art size). The three books should look pretty classy, we've already got samples from Kim at Preney.

$50 a book cover price for the regular edition which will only be available in comic book stores (shipping April 1990 on Book One, November 1990 on Book Two and April 1991 on Book Three).

$100 a book cover price for signed, and numbered edition which is only available from us. Anyone 'owning' a number from the First Fifth or Animated Cerebus limited editions is asked to claim their number by Feb. 28, 1990. After that time orders will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis. The signed and numbered edition is limited to the number of orders we have in hand as of Feb. 28, 1990 when Monique un-plugs the phone and goes home. Prices are quoted in Canadian funds. And in our housewares department ... versatile cookware.

Really, ordinarily I wouldn't (and don't) do this. It is a reaction to having changed studio location seven times since I started drawing. Once more and it's one more thing I can forget about (on a purely Comics Journal interview note; this is an artistic/business decision. On a personal level I will die renting my place of residence and shake my head warily at this whole business. As if anyone can *own* a piece of the world. Oh well. When in Bedlam ...)

For our part, Ger and I promise to be the last things moved into the new Aardvark Building in Mid-Town Kitchener. If possible we shall be borne across the dozen or so blocks still pencilling and inking, by a team of Professional Movers. We won't miss a beat.

★★★★★

This probably isn't a good time to mention there's a price increase coming, is it? No, I didn't think so.

★★★★★

Hey! coming up we have Cerebus Previews of Martin Wagner's *Hepcats* and Rick Veitch's *Brat Pack;* they almost rhyme. Martin, Rick! Get out here and cheer these people up.

★★★★★

I owe Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird a very large apology for accusing them in the Comics Journal interview of abdicating their control of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles to their agent (who, in these pages, anyway, shall be nameless). Steve Bissette, who was up for a visit after the last Toronto Con informs me that each artist in the Mirage 'stable' is free to negotiate (or not negotiate) the sale of any and all rights to any and all work they create in association with Mirage without interference or prejudice on the part of their employers. Kevin, Peter. I *am* sorry. Well done lads.

★★★★★

Since we will be offering the *2nd* printing of the *Cerebus* reprint volumes to the direct sales distributors we've decided to sign and number the 250 remaining copies of the 6000 copy *first* printing. You can specify if you just want an autograph and no. or if you want it personalized (within reason). I will even include a short message (ie. "to my closest personal friend your name here"). $50 U.S. $59 Canadian. Our phone lines are open.

★★★★★

I just found out how our mortgage works.

Sodding bastards.

Cerebus

NO. 126 SEPTEMBER 1989

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

MONIQUE KAPTEIN
Administrative Assistant

JAKA'S STORY
a novel

•

PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 114)

•

POGROM'S PROGRESS
(Cerebus 115 to Cerebus 119)

•

THE POET
(Cerebus 120 to Cerebus 130)

•

MYSTERY ACHIEVEMENT
(Cerebus 131 to Cerebus 136)

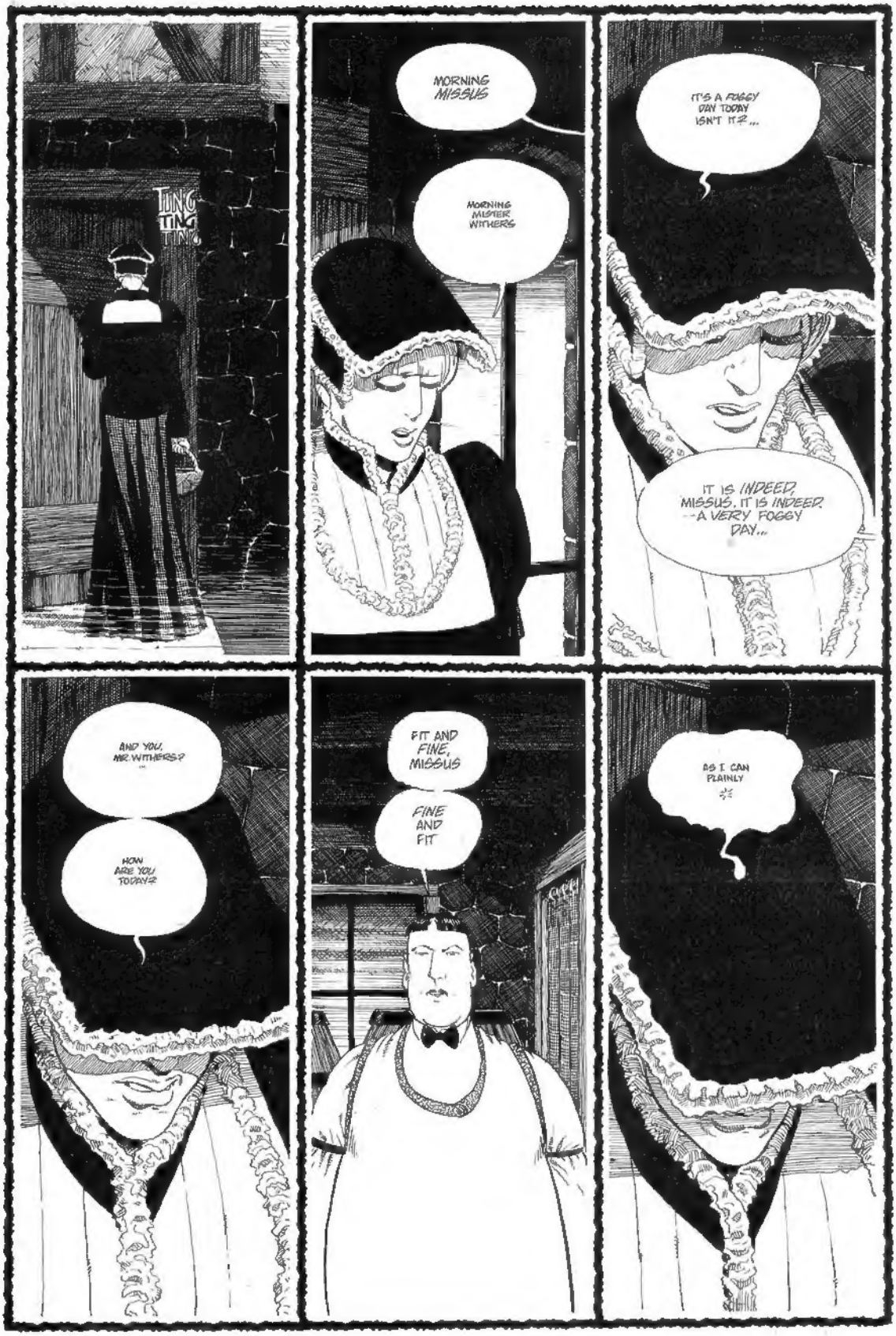
•

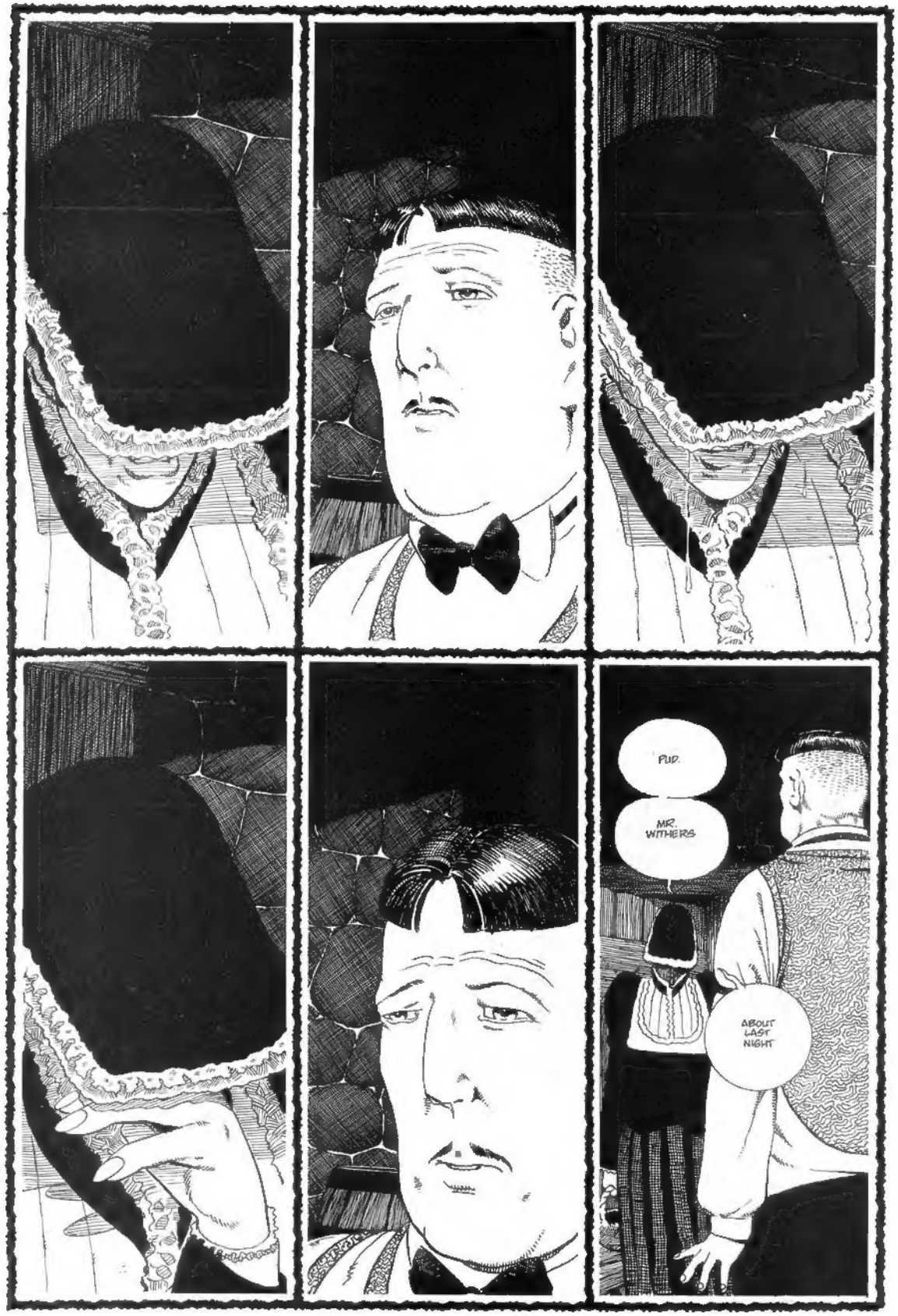
CEREBUS IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC. P.O. BOX 1674 STN. C KITCHENER ONTARIO CANADA N2G 4R2

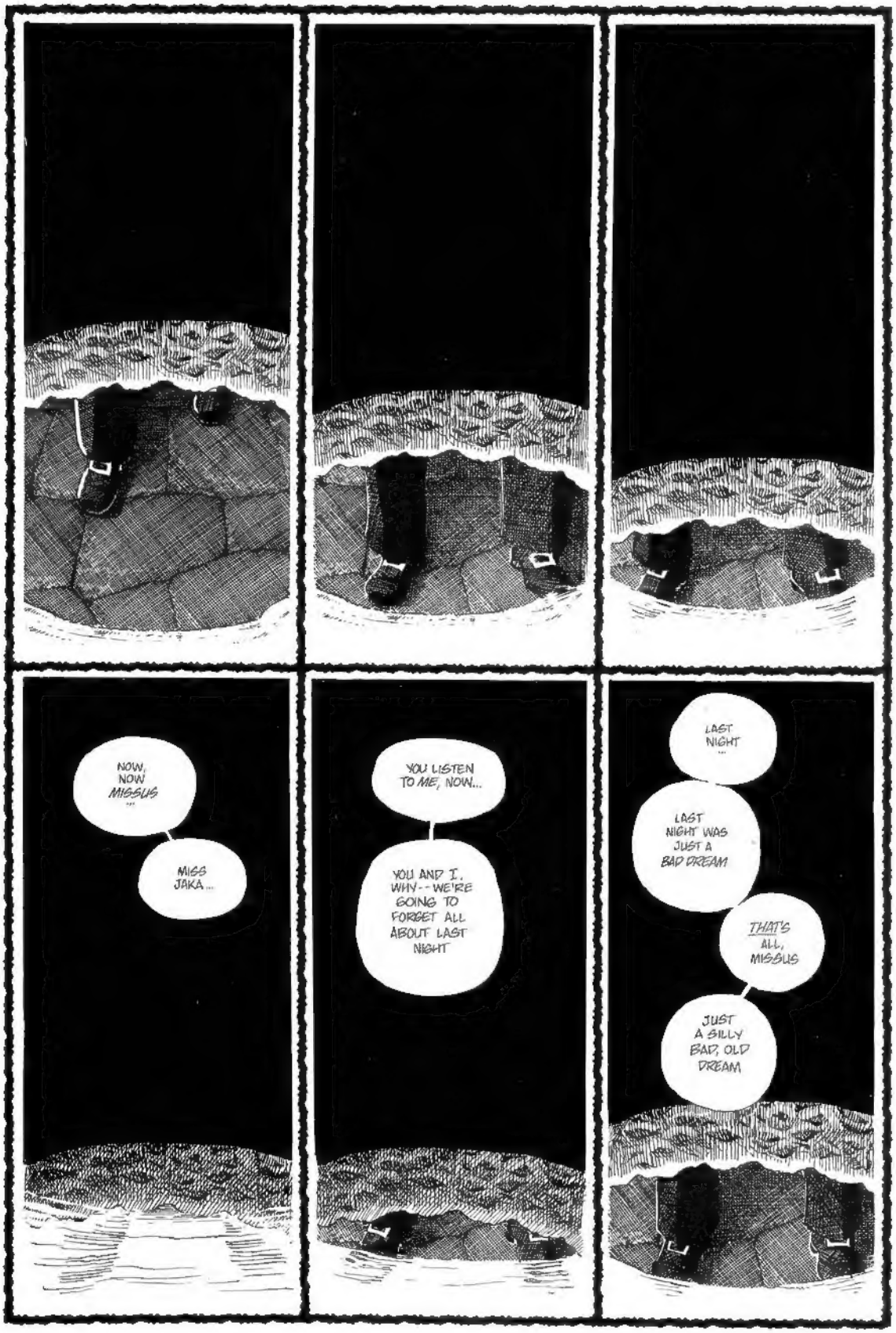
ALL CONTENTS © 1989 DAVE SIM.

PRINTED IN CANADA BY PRENEY PRINT & LITHO INC., WINDSOR, ONTARIO.

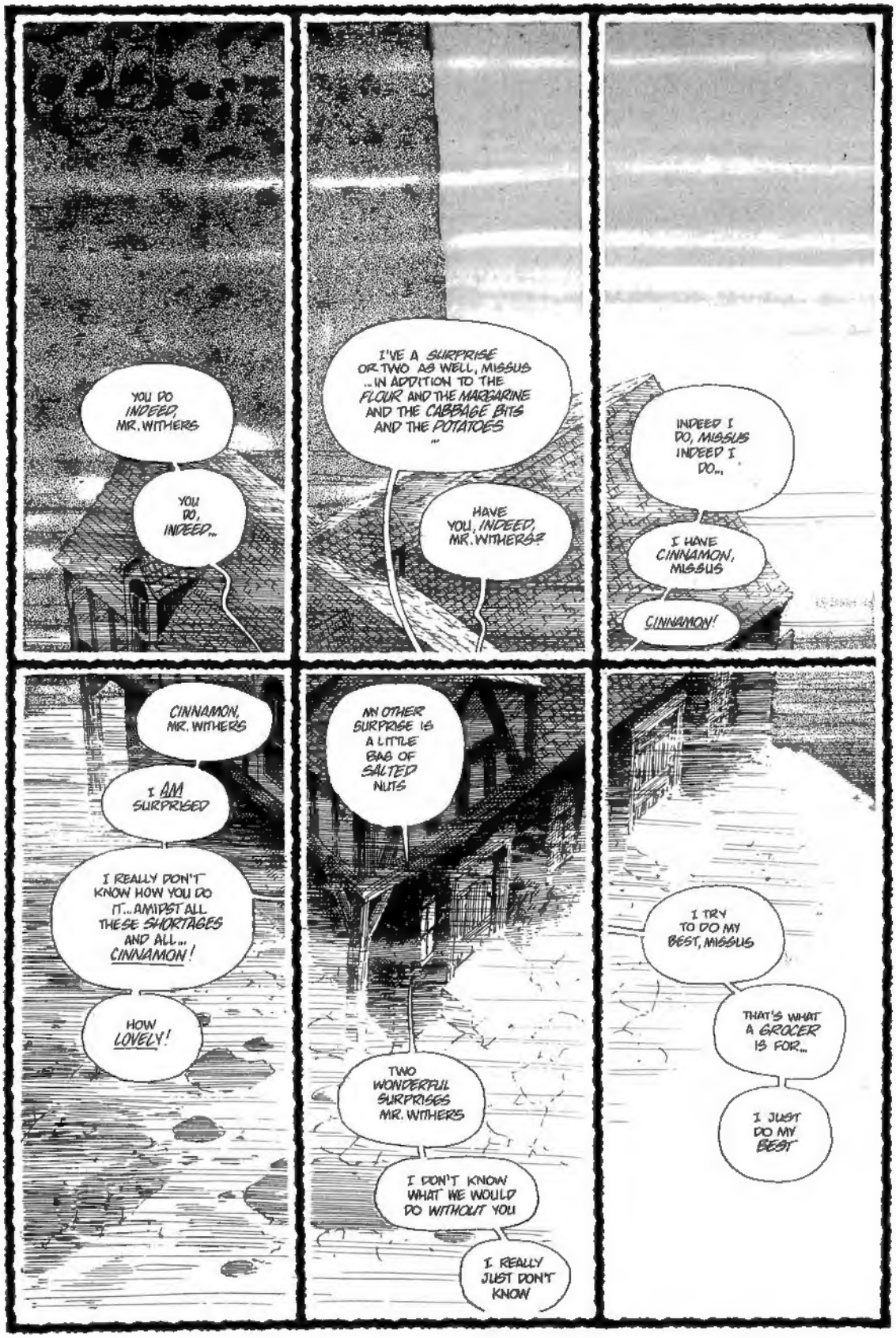
PRINTED IN CANADA


TING TING TING
MORNING MISSUS
MORNING MISTER WITHERS
IT'S A FOGGY DAY TODAY ISN'T IT?...
IT IS INDEED, MISSUS. IT IS INDEED. --A VERY FOGGY DAY...
AND YOU, MR. WITHERS?
HOW ARE YOU TODAY?
FIT AND FINE, MISSUS
FINE AND FIT
AS I CAN PLAINLY


PUP.
MR. WITHERS
ABOUT LAST NIGHT


NOW, NOW MISSUS ...
MISS JAKA...
YOU LISTEN TO ME, NOW...
YOU AND I, WHY--WE'RE GOING TO FORGET ALL ABOUT LAST NIGHT
LAST NIGHT ...
LAST NIGHT WAS JUST A BAD DREAM
THAT'S ALL, MISSUS
JUST A SILLY BAD, OLD DREAM

SNIFF
YOU'RE A FIT AND FINE SPECIMEN MR. WITHERS
THANK YOU, MISSUS. I DO MY BEST..


YOU DO INDEED, MR. WITHERS
YOU DO, INDEED...
I'VE A SURPRISE OR TWO AS WELL, MISSUS ..IN ADDITION TO THE FLOUR AND THE MARGARINE AND THE CABBAGE BITS AND THE POTATOES ...
HAVE YOU, INDEED, MR. WITHERS?
INDEED I DO, MISSUS INDEED I DO...
I HAVE CINNAMON, MISSUS
CINNAMON!
CINNAMON, MR. WITHERS
I AM SURPRISED
I REALLY DON'T KNOW HOW YOU DO IT... AMIDST ALL THESE SHORTAGES AND ALL... CINNAMON!
HOW LOVELY!
MY OTHER SURPRISE IS A LITTLE BAG OF SALTED NUTS
TWO WONDERFUL SURPRISES MR. WITHERS
I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE WOULD DO WITHOUT YOU
I REALLY JUST DON'T KNOW
I TRY TO DO MY BEST, MISSUS
THAT'S WHAT A GROCER IS FOR...
I JUST DO MY BEST

Miss Jaka. My wife died just about a year ago now.

Oh, Pud. I didn't know. I'm so sorry.

It's okay, Miss Jaka. She went quietly and there wasn't much pain. Praise Tarim.

Praise Tarim.

You and your husband, Miss Jaka. You're happy here?

Oh, yes, Pud. You've been wonderful. We owe you a lot.

You're very lucky to have each other Miss Jaka.

Yes. Yes we are.

I'd like both of you to stay here for a long time.

Oh, Pud. I'm so glad. We are happy here.

Except. There will have to be some...changes made.

Changes, Pud? What sort of changes?

Don't move, Miss Jaka. Please.

I'm not going to hurt you.

SHE RE-ENTERED THOSE rooms, small step by small step; noting, as she did so, that the polished checker'd floor of the entryway seemed to gleam more brightly; the intertwining loops and flourishes of the Shen wallpaper appeared more intricate and complex; the Locked Door and the door to Nurse's bedroom seemed more finely-hewn and noble in their aspect with a stately grace each mirrored in the other, visually pleasing and symetrical.

She paused in that doorway which opened onto the compact oval living room and gazed silently about her, seeing (as if for the first time) the luxurious and elegant furnishings at which she had scarcely glanced before.

It was *hers*.

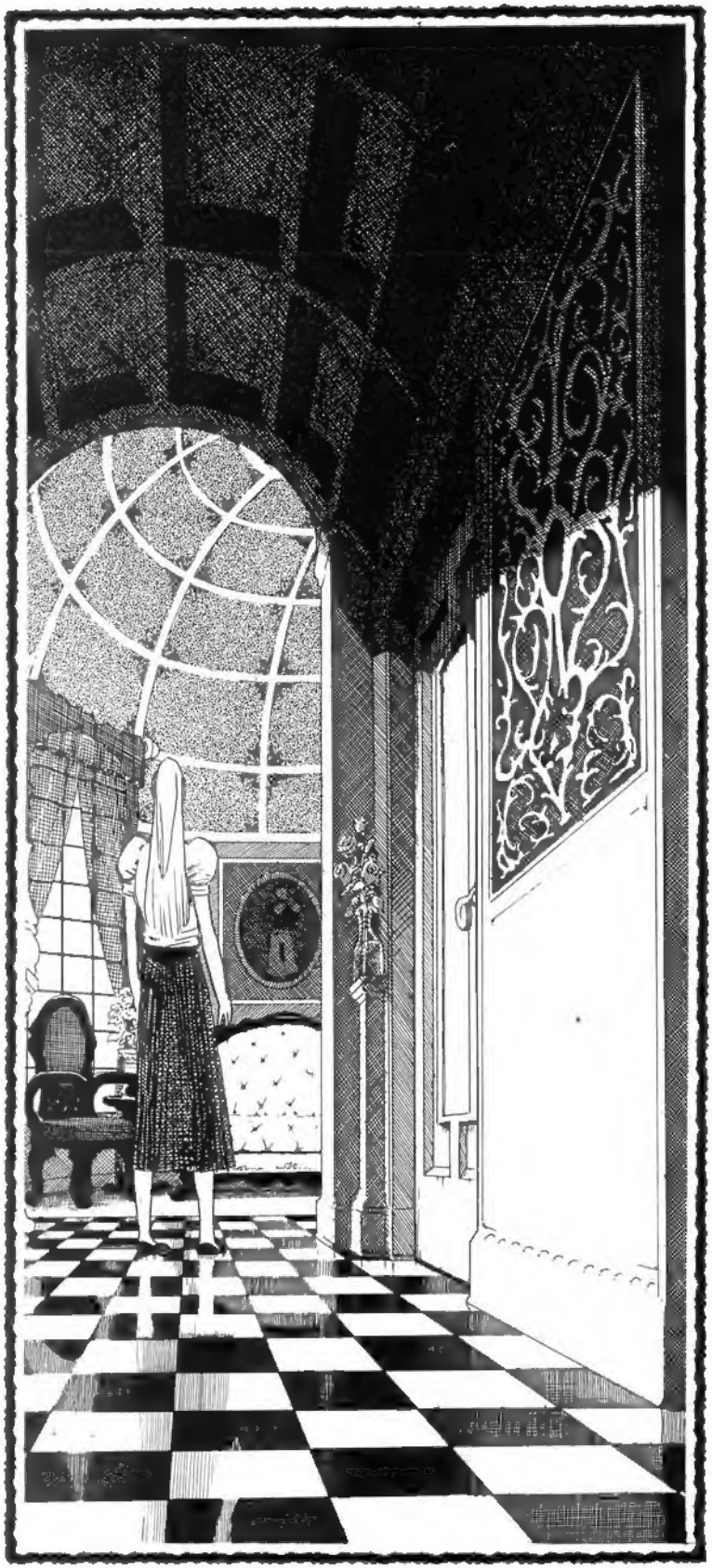
The entire suite of rooms; from the simple, yet luminous, dining room dominated by a large bay window to the large, square bedroom (so spacious and bright; all of Nurse's wordly possessions would fit the space occupied by Jaka's canopied bed. How *had* she never seen that?) to the cramped kitchen (huddled about its single, tiny window which admitted light only with the greatest reluctance for a brief period between dawn and high noon. How *had* it escaped her notice?).

For the first while, small step by small step, she traversed the confines of those rooms; everything so extraordinarily familiar to her, yet now rendered in pastel shades of novelty seeming to issue forth from every corner. Several times she found herself transfixed by an inscribed "I" or some feature or colouration in a family portrait wherein she saw herself ... her true self ... reflected. Through the living room to the dining room; through the dining room to the short hallway appended by an antechamber; through the antechamber to her bedroom, she passed.

And then her steps were retraced, her head swiveling on the graceful swan-like neck, her scalp tingling pleasurably, her eyes drinking in each detail of those surroundings; as if she were about to embark on an extended journey and she wished to remember every detail of Home, catching the reflection of each panel and moulding in the Face of Memory.

Many minutes had fled (or had it been an hour?) when she found herself once more in that doorway facing her oval living room, her mind besieged by a tempest of new thoughts and unfamiliar emotions.

She sighed, heavily, and relaxed.



IN THE NEXT INSTANT, her decision made, she hastily untied the large black satin bow at her throat, pulling it free of the crisply-starched and restraining collar.

Instinctively, she started toward her room, where (naturally) she intended to place the shiny ribbon in the exact location ordained by Nurse for that purpose, just to the right of the mirror (and Missy) on her bureau. She hesitated then, and, with a wicked smile of self-satisfaction, dropped it carelessly onto the hand-carved ebony chair.

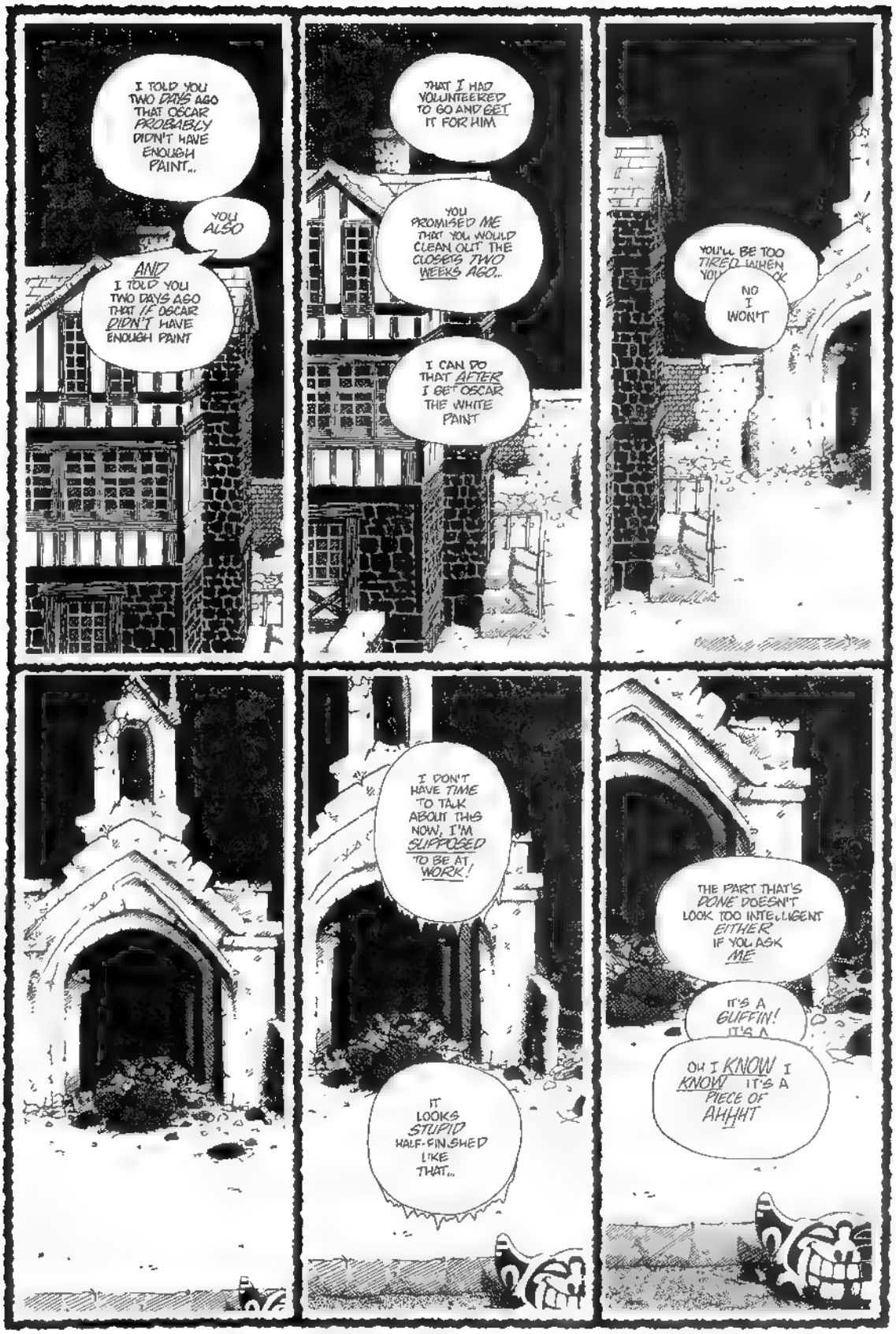
A few flickering movements of her fingers on the luminous mother-of-pearl fastenings and it was joined there by her white, silk blouse. When, (in her judgement), the blouse fell into a configuration that appeared *too* precise, she shifted the right sleeve so that it hung, *quite* indecorously, over the edge.

The bow in her hair (as was usually the case) was an altogether more difficult challenge to her dexterity. Hands over head, she endeavoured by touch, alone, to differentiate ribbon from hair; plucking and pulling with finger and thumbnail at the intransigent knot. It gave slightly, a gap forming, into which an index finger-tip could be insinuated, wriggling, hooking about and pulling free the cloth, sending the liberated blonde flax of her hair cascading across her back and shoulders, arraying itself on and about the gray boys' undershirt which served as her lingerie and for which she harboured a deep loathing that burned within her like a hard, gem-like flame.

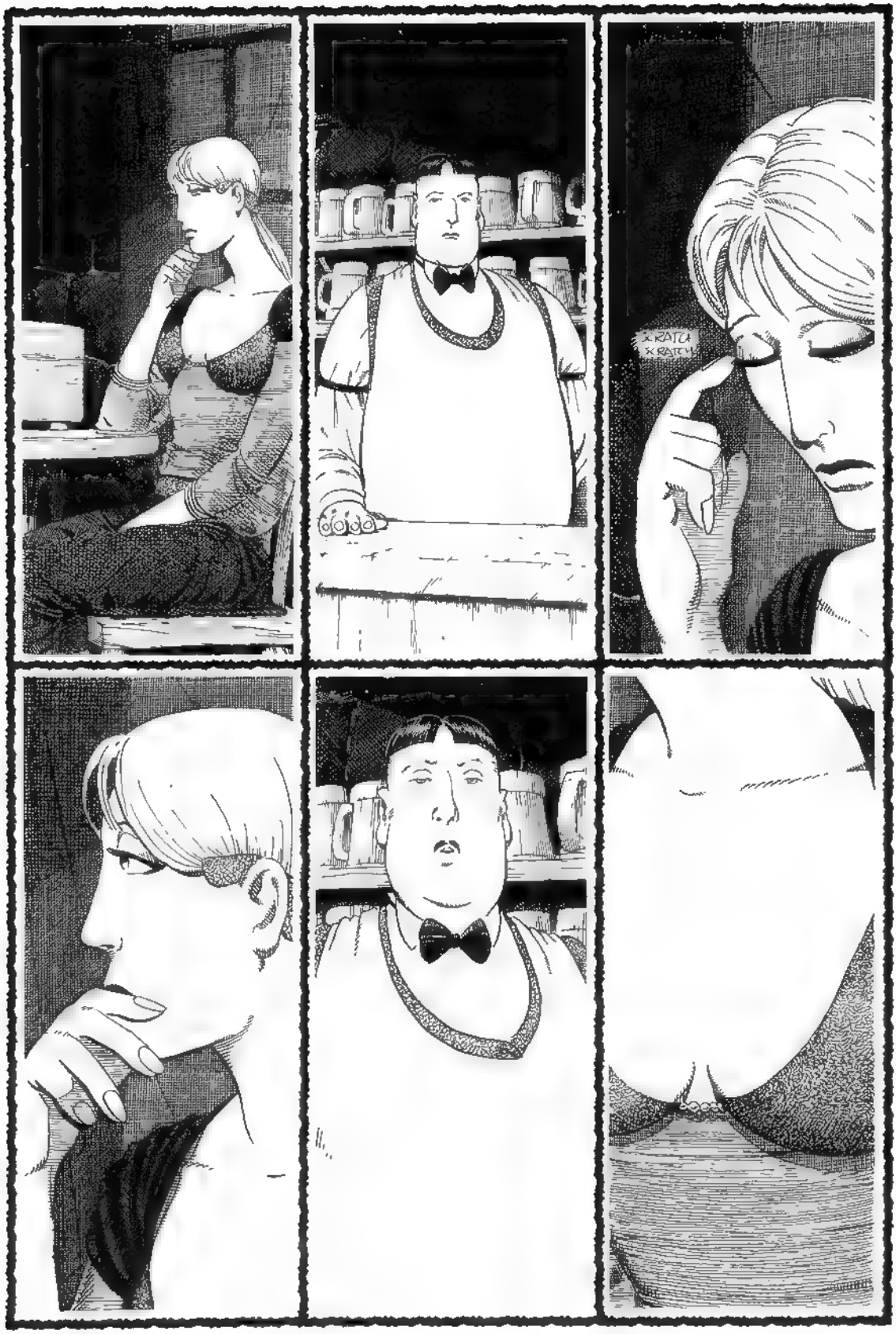
Shaking free her hair, flipping it backward with hands and forearms, she made her way to the Hidden Room.

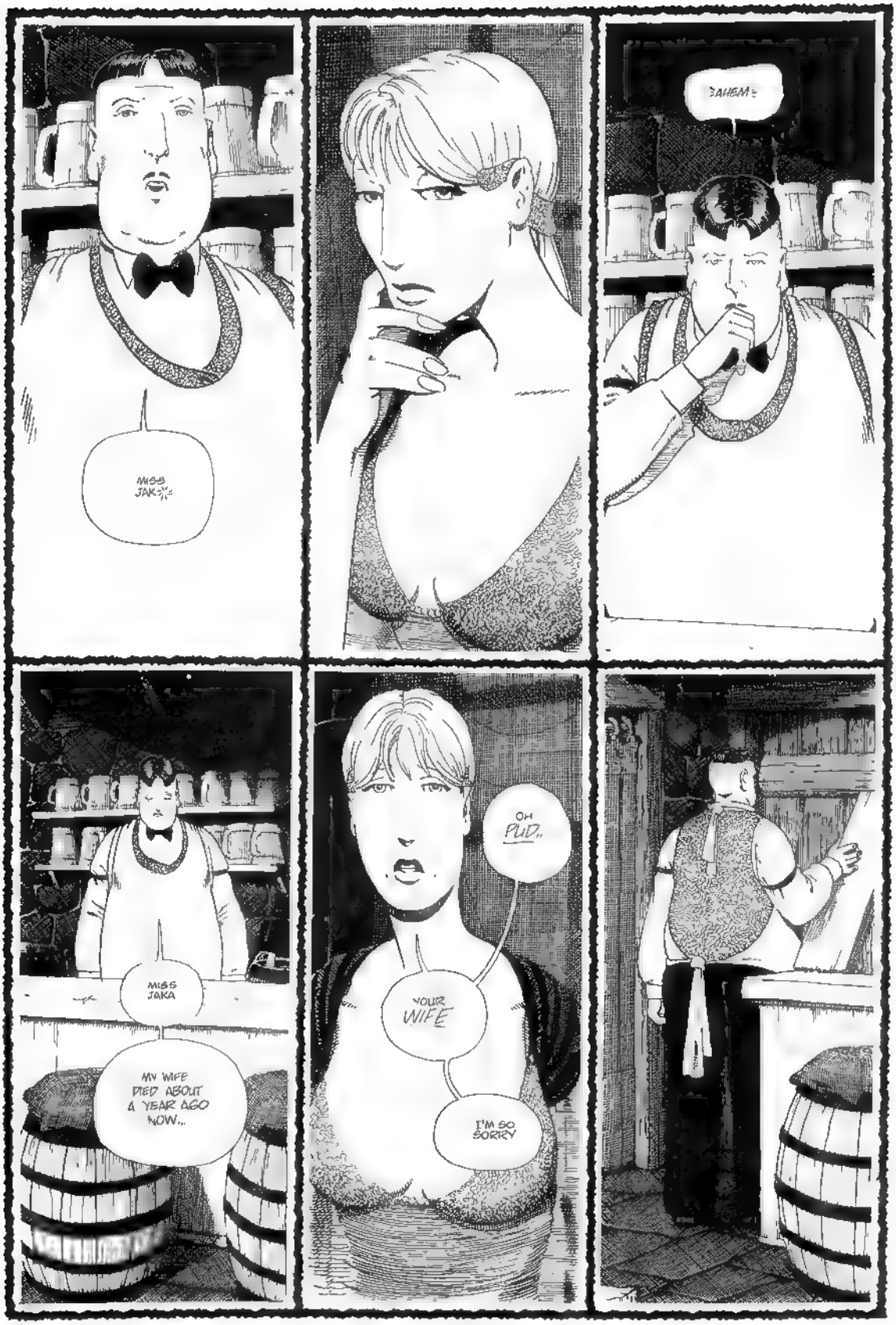
The suite was something *they* (Lord Julius? The government?) had *given* her. The Hidden Room was her own discovery and, consequently (to Jaka's mind, in any event) more surely hers alone.

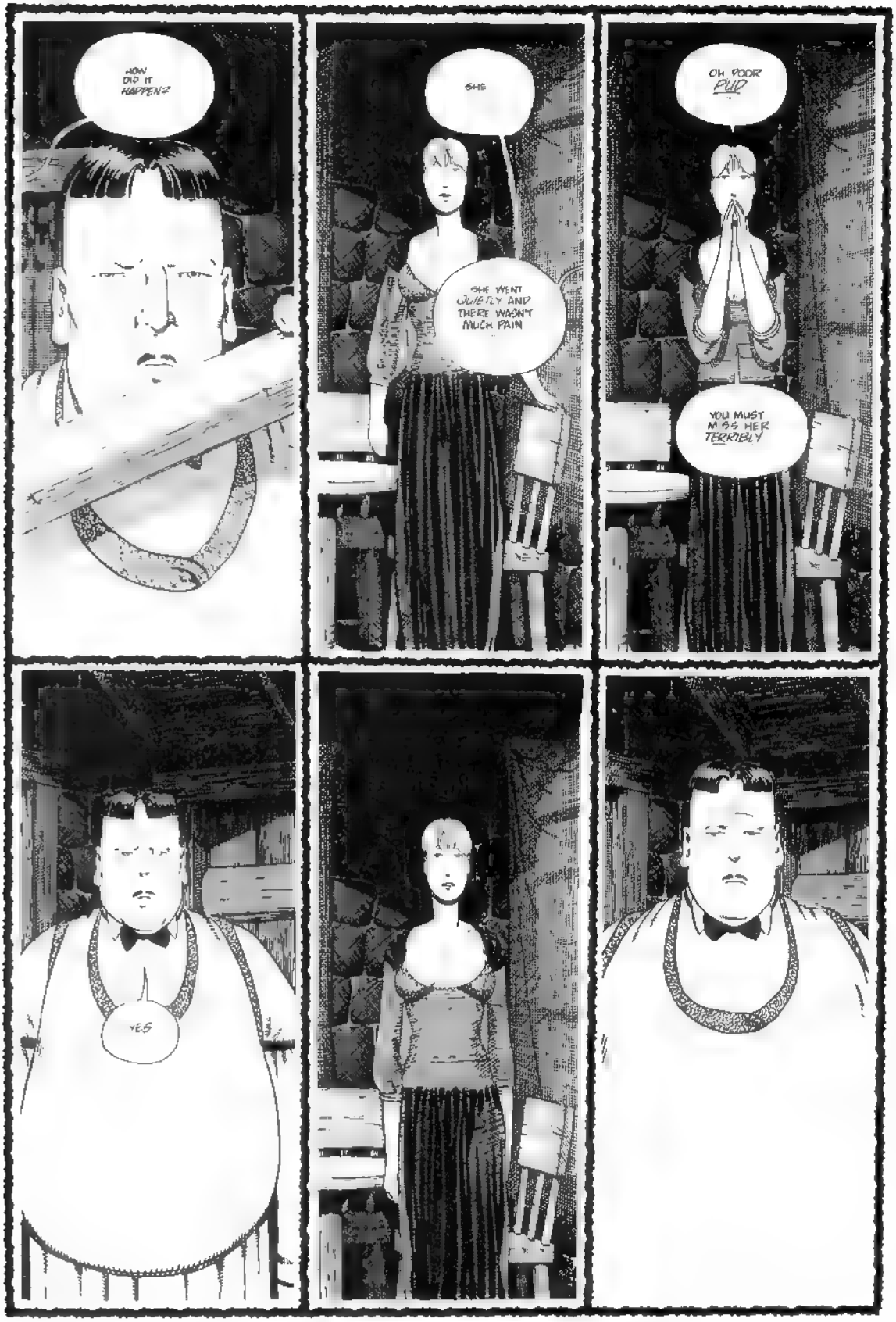
DURING THE SEVERAL hours of isolation which remained to her before Lessons, she whirled and spun about the grimy interior of the Hidden Room; for a while, with her eyes nearly shut; for a while, observing her finger-tips as they soared and swooped past wall and skylight, door and tile, as if at a great remove. As had been the case at the playground, she felt something lift within her, rising like bubbles in fine champagne, taking the form of quiet murmuring laughter; then a nearly feline purr; then a singular and delightful combination of the two. Her dancing, so perfectly and

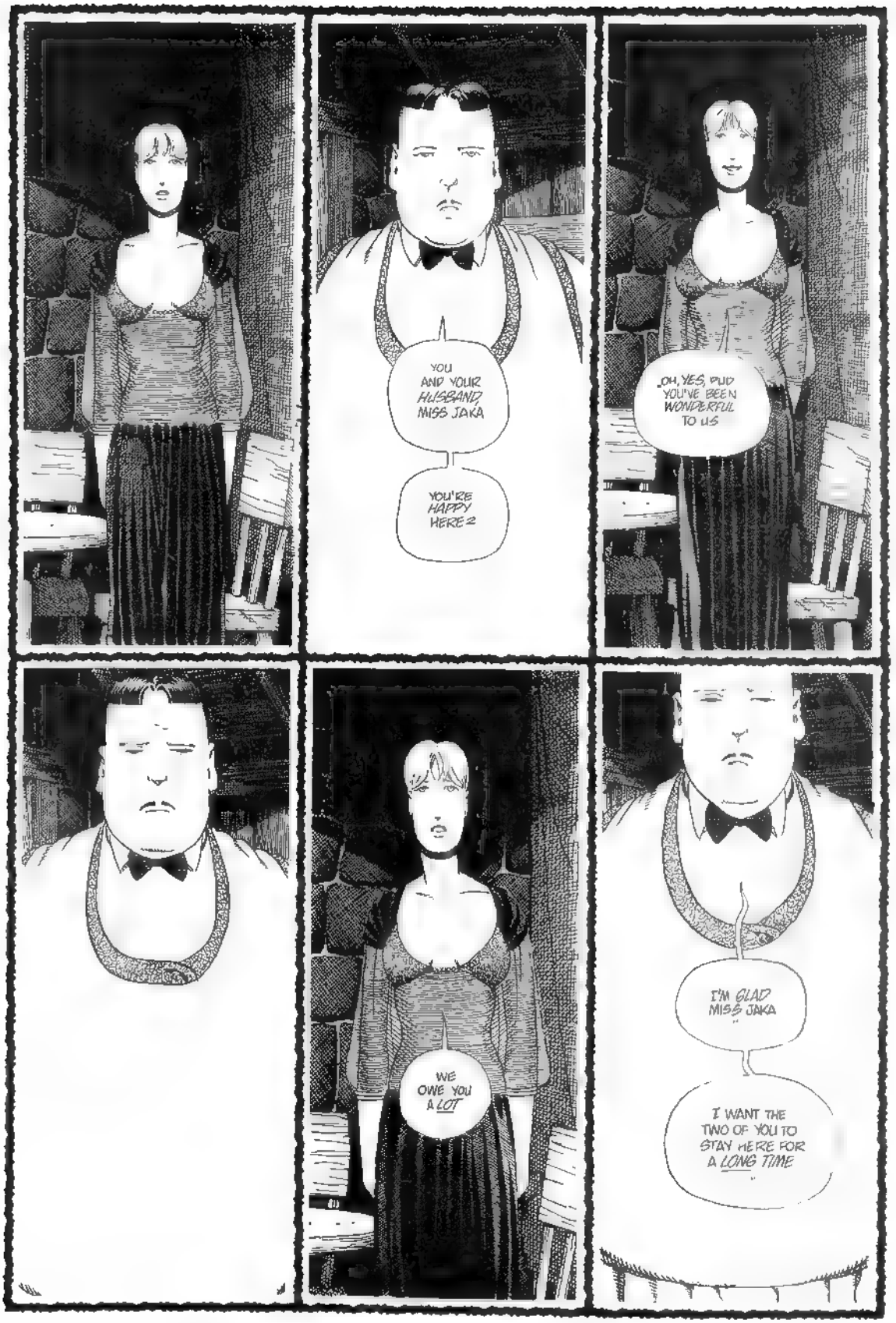

I TOLD YOU TWO DAYS AGO THAT OSCAR PROBABLY DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH PAINT...
YOU ALSO
AND I TOLD YOU TWO DAYS AGO THAT IF OSCAR DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH PAINT
THAT I HAD VOLUNTEERED TO GO AND GET IT FOR HIM
YOU PROMISED ME THAT YOU WOULD CLEAN OUT THE CLOSETS TWO WEEKS AGO...
I CAN DO THAT AFTER I GET OSCAR THE WHITE PAINT
YOU'LL BE TOO TIRED WHEN YOU
NO I WON'T
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO TALK ABOUT THIS NOW, I'M SUPPOSED TO BE AT WORK!
IT LOOKS STUPID HALF-FINISHED LIKE THAT...
THE PART THAT'S DONE DOESN'T LOOK TOO INTELLIGENT EITHER IF YOU ASK ME
IT'S A GUFFIN! IT'S A
OH I KNOW I KNOW IT'S A PIECE OF AHHHT

IT IS, TOO, ART!
RICK WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS SOME OTHER TIME.
I PROMISED OSCAR I'D GET THE PAINT TOMORROW
WE'LL SEE
NO! NOT "WE'LL SEE"
I'M GOING TO GET THE PAINT TOMORROW!
I'M LATE FOR WORK
WE'LL DISCUSS THIS WHEN I GET BACK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREA
CRE
CLICK
CLACK


SCRATCH
SCRATCH


MISS JAKA
AHEM
MISS JAKA
MY WIFE DIED ABOUT A YEAR AGO NOW..
OH
YOUR WIFE
I'M SO SORRY

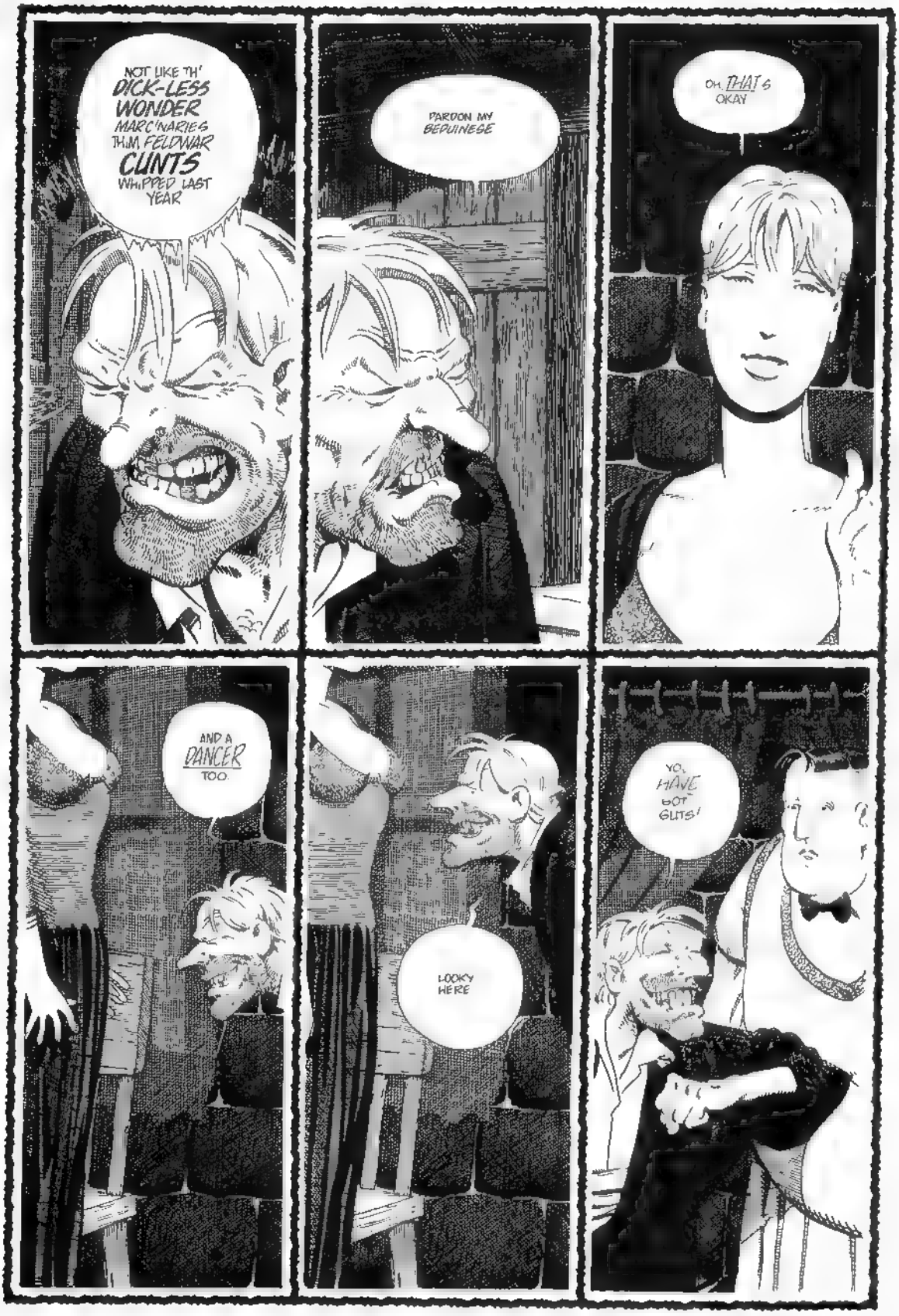

HOW DID IT HAPPEN?
SHE
SHE WENT QUIETLY AND THERE WASN'T MUCH PAIN
OH POOR PUD
YOU MUST MISS HER TERRIBLY
YES


YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND, MISS JAKA
YOU'RE HAPPY HERE?
„OH, YES, BUT YOU'VE BEEN WONDERFUL TO US
WE OWE YOU A LOT
I'M GLAD MISS JAKA
I WANT THE TWO OF YOU TO STAY HERE FOR A LONG TIME

I'M GLAD TOO PUD WE ARE HAPPY HERE
EXCEPT...
THERE'LL HAVE TO BE SOME CHANGES MADE.
CHANGES PUD? WHAT SORT OF...?
CLIK KLAK
YES?

THIS YOUR PLACE?
YES SIR
TH GUFFIN
THAT YOURS TOO?
TH' PAINTED HEAD
IT'S ON MY PART OF THE ROAD-WAY
YES

BUT I...
DIDN'T
LET ME SHAKE YOUR HAND, YOUNG FELLER!
A GUFFIN!
BIG AS LIFE, TOO
YOU'VE GOT GUTS, SONNY..
WELL
I
HERE NOW NO FALSE MODESTY!
I WAS WITH TH' LESTAN REG'LARS AT THE BIG ONE N NINE'Y-FIVE..
I..
KNOW
GUTS.
AND SONNY BOY? YOU...
GOT
GUTS.


NOT LIKE TH' DICK-LESS WONDER MARC'NARIES TH.M FELDWAR CUNTS WHIPPED LAST YEAR
PARDON MY BEDUINESE
OH, THAT'S OKAY
AND A DANCER TOO.
LOOKY HERE
YO. HAVE GOT GUTS!

HEY!
HEY, GIRLIE!
AVE YE GOT A WEE DANCE FER A VET'RAN?
MM?
'AVE YE?
YOU BET YOUR ASS, GRAMPAW...
WHAAAA
HOO

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

I'm not answering the letters on the letters page any more, but I am answering more of my mail personally (as well as the occasional letters page letter) which means ... what? You should write me a letter and expect a reply? Mm. I'm not answering *THAT* many of them. That you shouldn't be offended that I don't answer you on the letters page? That it doesn't mean I'm angry at you guys? Yes. That's what it means. And I still *read* all the letters. It's no big deal. 'Hey, Dave we have three letters here that poured in today.' Now I've done it. Three Fucking letters a day; why *doesn't* he answer all his mail? Asshole. Tell you what. I will answer *all* letters personally that come in for two weeks after this issue of Cerebus ships. *Last* issue. Two weeks after last issue shipped. No that's not fair. Okay. Two weeks after *this* issue ships. Every letter. I promise.

★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I said hello to Gerhard in Dallas, but he neglected to tell me (assuming that my sources were not lying) that he was (allegedly, you understand) taping videos there for your amusement. But on reflection I'm glad I didn't know, since almost certainly I would have tried to be amusing, and you know how that always works out. At best I might have related to you some of the incidents at the con — like the panel where Marlon Brando got up and told everyone that he didn't want to be involved in movies anymore, he wanted to get into comics. Then he wrote an aggrieved letter to Variety saying that he didn't say anything of the kind, that he still enjoys working in the movies, etc., particularly his recent movie *The Freshman*, which I hear is going to be adapted by Epic into a three-issue prestige-format miniseries. The best of both worlds, yes?

Where was I? Well, I liked your interview with Gary, if only because it gave birth to the "Jeez-Gary-do-I-have-to" cartoon, which is destined to go down in the history of one man's mind as having a near-Feifferesque brilliance of psychological perspicuity, except insofar as no one outside comics will know what the hell it means. But near-Feifferesque brilliance is still pretty damn brilliant, wouldn't you agree? And moreover, little as I like to be obliging, I'm obliged to agree with most of your statements — you know, distributors are responsible for their own mistakes if they mess up, all things have varying degrees of merit, and like that.

Both you and Gary had some justice on your respective sides regarding the argument of whether an artist should be allowed to pack up and leave despite contractual agreements — on the one hand, I agree with Gary that contracts should be honored, and on the other I agree with you that artistic endeavor is something of a special case — ergo, if So-and-So is not happy where he works, he's not going to do his best possible work even with the best intentions. The difference between the artistic professions and others is nicely pointed out when you emphasized that in one sense your work is not entirely something you produce consciously, but with the inspirational aid of the Dave Sim muse. So — I agree with both of you. Wishy-washy, Hmm?

Did I mention *Cerebus* yet? Well, I'm enjoying the bejeezus out of Oscar's character (good thing I didn't say Oscar himself, what?) Of course he speaks French, he's from the French-speaking part of Estarcion. Rick is fun. Jaka is cool. Cerebus is ... there. Has he considered the virtues of solitaire?

Half-sincerely yours,

Gene Phillips
2750 Holly Hall #1105
Houston, TX
77054

★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I'm sitting here in my room. The ex-girlfriend and my ex-best friend have been going out for a few months now and I still care for her very much. Yesterday I found out that my ex-best friend gave her his class ring and she took it. Gave hers to him too. Sigh. She's gone, Dave. She's gone and she's never coming back.

I stayed home from school today because I just couldn't face her. Been staying up in my room, reading Cerebus. Reading Jaka's Story, reading Church & State, reading the Swords books.

Dave, thank you for Jaka's Story.

I think it brings all the broken-hearted people in the world closer together. We can all share in the experience.

United, we are unstoppable.

God, I loved her.

Thank you,

Jeremy P. Bushnell
1120 Bristol Rd
Warminster, PA
18974

★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I always (well, for the past 6 or 7 years, at least) felt that it would be appropriate to write and thank you for saving the world from supermutants with large chests and big muscles, and proving that comics can become a medium for ART, as well as for business (DC is now busy showing that they are not mutually exclusive activities, which is true, but not the way they think), so I'll take this opportunity to respond to Andrew Knapp's letter in issue #123.

First of all, the brilliant but misguided Derrida's reading of Rousseau is found in *Of Grammatology*, for any *Cerebus* readers who wish to try to grasp what Andrew is talking about (is it the presence of absence, or the absence of pretense?) Also, for a better understanding of all of this stuff, especially the production of the subject, the reader is directed to Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (vols 1-3) and *Power/Knowledge*.

What we find in all this Wankers propoganda is the glamorization of masturbation, the creation of a dichotomy between sexual intercourse and masturbation in which the latter is the prioritized term. Andrew is betraying his Derridian background by only taking the first step of deconstruction: inversion. He has simply switched the value of the two terms in the ratio. A true deconstructionalist would say that both terms are simply inseparable parts of a larger field of sexuality.

Metaphysical systems tend to oversimplify, and Derrida has created a metaphysics, albeit a very subtle and subversive one. Deconstruction, thus, seduces us by expanding the field of the norm, but always leaves us with a prioritized term. Some of the dichotomy between normal and deviant remains. S&M, fetishism, homosexu-

ality, etc., all remain in their historically determined positions. The photographer Robert Mapplethorpe has made much greater steps in breaking these walls than Jacques Derrida.

It seems to me that the debate has now turned not to 'which is more pleasurable, intercourse or masturbation?', not to 'which is safer?', but to 'which is more comforting, reality or fantasy?' The Wankers champion fantasy, for the object of desire is easier to control, whereas the Intercoursians champion reality, where the object of desire can interact on a more equal level to the subject. Wankers give up dynamic interaction for domination, while Intercoursians give up control and individuality for this interaction. But the world has 'progressed' to a point where this distinction can no longer be made. Rather, it is realities which are made by clever manipulation of fantasies. Television shows become more 'realistic' for several reasons: they are modifying themselves to more closely emulate the world outside of Hollywood, and the world is modifying themselves to more closely resemble television. Thus the western world has become a macroscopic version of Hollywood, as is made obvious by the simple fact that the distribution of employment is directly proportional to the distribution of blowjobs. There is no longer a real world, but it is rather (as Jean Baudrillard puts it in "The Precession of Simulacra") "a hyperreal henceforth sheltered from the imaginary, and from any distinction between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of models and the simulated generation of differences." One example that Baudrillard uses is Watergate. "Watergate is not a scandal: this is what must be said at all costs." Watergate was produced as a scandal to present the illusion that there is such a thing as non-scandalous government, and to hide the fundamentally immoral and ferocious nature of Capitalism (of which communism is a part). Facts and images have become so intertwined that the only difference is simply a simulated difference.

With sex, then, we find that the distinction is difficult to maintain. What exactly is intercourse? For men: masturbation into a living orfice. For women: masturbation with a warm, yet inefficient dildo. Both often with delusions of domination or submission. What is masturbation? Intercourse with a hand/or foreign object, often accompanied with images of another to dominate or submit to. The 'object of desire' is never a thing (animate or non); it is always an image of a thing, and this is true for both intercourse and masturbation. All forms of sexual activity, then, consist of the stimulation of primary and/or secondary sex organs whilst creating images for oneself. Any differences are merely apparent, simulated, hyperreal, and that act itself is merely the habitual repetition of a twin-orbital model of sex which, for Americans at least, revolves around puritanical (which is equal to and includes its antithesis) and Hollywood-glamour images of sex.

End of dissertation. If this sounds like a bleak picture of sex, take heart: you've been produced as a subject that can take endless pleasure from this perpetually repeated act of sweating and grunting and having muscle spasms. So smile, think of Jaka, and don't forget to wash your hands before dinner.

Postmodernly yours,

Bernie Mojzes
1833 Addison St
Philadelphia, PA
19146

P.S. There was something else I wanted to say, about "Jaka's Story" and my life, but I can't bring myself to say it. If you print this, she'll read it, and she'll understand.

★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I've been meaning to whip out a letter to Michael Stipe and ask 'Just what the heck is going on?'. I hate it when any band I used to respect gets all politically conscious and environmentally aware and think they have to teach me some kind of message. Land sakes! Back to the basics, Mike! Incoherent mumbling is more moody and poetic and it seems to impress girls who read things like Cocteau and Peake. Not bad. (Lest you add those thick, black glasses that symbolize sexual deviance and promiscuity in high order intellectual circles (that tend to treat me like a grubby prole—'but, I'm an *ARTIST* I tell you!!) of which I harbour a shameful fetish for).

Then I thought: eh, why bother? I'll write the guy who does Cerebus instead. Not only does he have a fascinating book, but he lets folks use his letter page to write clever, witty stuff. (Holy cat! I just realized ... if you and Letterman got your mail mixed up nobody would know!) No need for me to harbour on the fact that your book is a mighty fine read, I reckon enough folks have said this enough times that your confidence doesn't need the booster shot, dear sir.

Do you ever wonder what would happen if Jeannie and Samantha Stevens had a fight? It boggles. And doesn't it bug you the way Mr. Tate and Dr. Bellows are always snooping around, asking themselves to dinner and such, and always holding the job over the heads of Darren and Maj. Nelson respectively? I hate these authority types!

It's really miserable going to school in Arizona, Dave. I woke up yesterday and ambled into the bathroom to discover about 8 little black and silver beetles crawling on my toothbrush and deodorant. And all day long I've got to deal with these blonde, 'muscley' types whose idea of fun is laying out in the sun, listening to some 'all Phil Collins Songs' radio station. These people like to wear Spuds McKenzie t-shirts and put posters on their doors that say: 'Catch the Bullet' (the bullet happens to be a frosty can of Coors Lite, in case you didn't know. Yum!)

Shiver and shake! Society *is* a hole.

The only things that keep me sane are the I-Ching and Cerebus. And some other stuff. (A friend goes to school in Washington: the girl living next to him likes Nietzche and the fall and going barefoot on warm days. The girls across from me like Miami Sound Machine, shoes, and I don't know what they read, but TV Guide comes to mind. My friend is a kind soul so he doesn't rub this in).

If you own Webster's New World Dictionary (2nd edition) look up the word Silhouette, and you'll find this little picture of chubby, bald man in a tuxedo. Weird.

If I ever have a daughter I will name her Siebahn or Roe or Rococo. Or (get this) Dandelion. (I know, I know, I just happen to like it, okay?) I haven't been able to come up with any decent names for a boy, though I have given 'Noddy' some thought.

Alan Moore usually does a pretty good job, but I was a little bugged with the V for Vendetta thing. It was great until the end with the police inspector guy taking the LSD. Just didn't seem very realistic. Makes me wonder if Alan has actually had acid, and if he did, how long ago? Eh, never mind. I'm getting too picky.

Hey, Dave, you really should get those big 'ole books of yours in the stores cause folks like me who don't trust the postal system and don't have credit cards can't figure out how much those things cost in American money. C'mon, Dave, one thing I'm not is 'Math-smart' so why don't you help out us lazy clods who want to read the old stuff in big, glossy books.

Has anyone noticed that the nose of the camel in the cigarette ads is actually a penis?

I'm starting to get a headache from staring at this paper for too long and my roomate just came out of the bath-

room and said: 'Ya ever use a towel so long it starts to smell like fritos?' so I guess I better skeedadle, but not before I tell you the wise words my German teacher, Frau Green, once told me: 'As your head swells, so do your manners into good form!' It's kept me honest.

Yrs,

Duglas Kilbride
ASU, Cholla
909 S. Terrace Box 123
Tempe, AZ
85281

P S Is Cassandra a real witch? I think you should introduce us, Dave. I've been charmed by her wit and manner, Egad! Gasp!

P.P.S. Every Time I look at the time it's 23 minutes after the hour. Swear to God

P.P.S.S She smiled and took a long, squeeky pull at her cigarette, letting the pale blue smoke billow lazily out of her nostrils like mouldy snakes into her eyes which began to water ...

★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Did you know:

1 That if you drop the 's' from Cerebus and add 'nt' you get Cerebunt.

2 If you drop the 's' and add 'ttocks' you get Cerebuttocks.

Also, when I masturbate I think about Mrs. Henrot-Gutch. Do you think this is weird? My probationary officer doesn't understand.

Ben n' Dan (just friends)
Bethesda, MD

★★★★★

Dear Dave Sim,

I hope we both live until 2004 and that you'll continue to give the finger to the mass market and hold on to your principles.

I read the Comics Journal interview and got bored (45 pages and no Cerebus dirties, fucking hell.) You give me the impression of you being an egocentric, cynical lonely grumpy old bastard who is somehow destined to 'die alone unmourned and unloved,' when you are about 103 years old. (I'm talking shit, I know.)

If you haven't burned this letter yet, I have to tell you something. Cerebus is the best thing in my life, (my long-standing girlfriend a very close second). I have never experienced anything so "absolutely RIGHT" in any artistic medium so far in my life. The fact that a human can create such a thing almost makes me believe in God.

When I'm in a busy comic shop and see people buying X-men etc. I feel like shouting, and screaming, "You stupid fucking bastards why aren't you reading Cerebus?" But one thing stops me and this is why I am writing to you.

I don't want people who read X-men etc. to read Cerebus. I think people should have to prove themselves worthy of reading Cerebus. (I'm turning into a snob.)

Form a Cerebus fan club which costs $1000 to join. Only the true Cerebus fans would dare join them. Then , let'sbuy an island, the true Cerebus fans and you. We'll build a tower for you to continue till issue 300 and we'll treat you as a God.

Of course after you're finished issue 300, we'll tell you to fuck off.

We'll all go back to our bedrooms, read the 300 issues in one go then all blow our brains out on the same day.

I only feel this way because I lost my job, I can't get to sleep and I've wanted to write to you for a long time Dave. I'd get a kick out having my letter printed in the most perfect 'art' ever.

Will you make a small wish come true for me please Dave, I'm really quite pissed off.

Yours till 300 (and beyond)

Mitchell Laughlin
31 Harington Road
Aberdeen
Scotland

★★★★★

Dear Dave (Ger too),

Just thought that you should know that when I saw a production of Jules Feiffer's play 'Little Murders" recently, I kept thinking of the moon for no readily apparent reason.

Isn't life different from all of the alternatives?

Yours from now until Tuesday (not necessarily this Tuesday, but probably some Tuesday).

Dudley Arthur Horque
4/115 Havlin Street
Bendigo, Victoria
3550
Australia

★★★★★

Dave,

It's 1:30 in the morning and I've just read Cerebus Jaka Story 4-6 and I will read issue 120 soon.

My legs hurt real bad because my girlfriend cut school today. I read the letters column of 119 and someone wrote a letter from Claymount, Delaware. He said his comic dealer said he was "discriminating". There are only 3 comic dealers in New Castle County, Delaware that carry Cerebus and I know them all. Greg, who I've known for 10 years said, 'I thought you were dead. Where've you been? I think Dave and Gerhard are getting it on.' I thought it was funny, but since Gerhard is now suddenly Vice President I thought I'd dare you to print this letter and ask you about your relationship with Ger.

Anyway, I too, am very discriminating. The only comics I read any more are Cerebus and Reid Fleming The World's Toughest Milkman. I want you to know I am one of your supporters. I've been your jock strap since issue 30 and bought back to 15 and bought all your swords, pins, 3-D issues, etc. ... But I don't want thanks. It's all been well deserved.

If you print this, I want my girlfriend Tami to see her name in publication. And that I love her. Maybe I'll even turn her on to your book.

Mike Rissold
P.O. Box 9425
Newark, D
19714

P.S. How are you doing with not smoking? Hmmm? Still not smoking dope either?

★★★★★

Dear guys -

Having complained in the last letter, I feel free now to write of more wonderful things.

My life has changed due to this comic. I find myself kind of hovering around the bookstore at intervals, lurking in the back issues section. I now have my greedy mitts on Cerebus 123 and I am never disappointed, no, not this time either. Page one is just stunning. I always like the issue I'm dealing with. The artwork is always satisfying; however there is usually one plate, maybe two, that just blow me away.

I found you in two old issues of Epic. Colour!

If you stop what you're doing, if you one day wake and say, "Screw it! No more Cerebus!" I will kill myself. Just so you'll have it on your minds. If I don't get my Cerebus artwork, it is THE END, finis, goodbye. I can wait, tho, for a new T-shirt. Something not in black, perhaps?

Bravo, bravo, bravissimo!

Ferol Humphrey

★★★★★

Dave —

I'm a patient guy, been reading the little grey guy since #22. So please — howzabout a storyline about trout fishing?

I'm just askin'

John A. Wilcox
P O. Box 642
Green Farms, CT
06436

P.S. — where's my free sketch of Gary Groth?

THE ONE INTRODUCTION

The past ten years in comics have been something of a fireworks display. Startling flashes and loud bangs "oohs" and "aahs" and wonderstruck faces. Some of the pyrotechnics proved durable in their effect. Catherine wheels that continue to spin and fizz and provide inspiration long years after the blue touchpaper has been lit. Others less enduring, provided a moment of spectacle and excitement before dying away to a faint, bitter scent of gunpowder upon the breeze. Some failed to go off at all.

In the midst of all this sound and fury and sputtering illumination, Rick Veitch has provided a clear and consistent light. That is not to say that his work has been without its moments of dazzling brilliance: merely to remark that such flashes have perhaps seemed less startling as a result of being set against such an even and continuous brightness. Unswayed by the fashions and transient hysterias of his medium, he has forgone the pursuit of louder reports and more blinding radiances in favor of a steady but certain progress, measuring his sulphurs and saltpeters by the half-spoon rather than the shovel-full. As a result they always go off. They burn for weeks or months in the mind and more often than not they are extraordinarily beautiful.

The care and diligence displayed in this approach to one's craft are, in the instance of Rick Veitch, guided by what is surely one of the most original and fascinating minds in mainstream comics. It is a mind with a fine mesh, and while lesser creators with more loosely-woven nets catch only the biggest and most obvious of the ideas and concepts that evolve daily through their lives, Veitch is the one who goes home with a jar full of iridescent prawns and angelfish, the one who pans every fleck of gold from the silt of his experience.

I think it was this factor more than any other that first attracted me to Rick both as a person and as a creator. During the numerous trans-Atlantic calls that marked our run together on SWAMP THING, I can remember very few occasions on which I put the phone down without having received at least one fascinating notion or fragment of information to take away with me and chew over during the small hours. Look at the clipping from the McCuhan Institute that prefaces this current volume, and then read the subsequent pages for a clear illustration of the strange and fluorescent notions that Veitch has grown, like a crystal culture around this single seed of an idea. Read Rick's astonishing solo venture on SWAMP THING and see how he has woven the weirdest and most variegated strands of the religious culture surrounding him into a single seamless and lucid narrative. Veitch is someone who thinks well and it is clear from the resultant work that not a needlessly neuron or synapse sparking in the whole process is allowed to go to waste.

All creators to a degree must cultivate this attunement to the zeitgeist, this ability to separate the important signals from the mass of eclectic background noise that constantly bombards them. Still it must be said that the antennae that Rick Veitch has grown over the course of a long and painstaking career are more sensitively tuned than most. This is the man who told me that he dreamed the Challenger space shuttle disaster weeks before it happened in actuality. I believe him utterly, because I know him and because I know about the strange things that happen when a creator is totally tuned in to his work and to the external world that informs it.

In the years during which THE ONE was being conceived and written, the prevailing Zeitgeist was cloudy and laced with terrible lightning. And yet there were occasional glimpses of some new sun attempting to break through, albeit in such brief and inconstant bursts between the thunderheads that it was easy to believe them mere wishful imaginings. The nuclear giants snarled hungrily at each other and paved the ground, but the breakthroughs in computer science and quantum physics suggested a future in which the values that sustained their conflict might at last become meaningless and crumble away to dust. The rainforests fell at six acres per second, but a vital new culture seemed to be flourishing, augmented by technology, amongst the graffiti and ghettoblasters of the inner cities. Like any very big clouds and very small and fragile rays of light, but their contrast was striking, at times heartbreaking, and in THE ONE Rick Veitch did his very best to capture it, wrap it in newsprint paper and present it to his readers in a form they could understand.

Processed through the Veitch mind with its unlikely mixture of trashpop sensibilities, erudition and insight, what came out at the other end was the mood of the timesencyphered and encoded into a tale of supermen, Ubermice and Gotterdamerung: a tale that placed a realistic, if satirical appraisal of our global psychosis next to an extravagant utopian fantasy that Timothy Leary and Max Yasgur would have been proud of. Characters plucked from the American dream, both high-brow and lowbrow versions, cohabited dynamically within the pages of a comic where Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart rubbed shoulders with a certain Poor Little Rich Boy grown old and mad and depraved by wealth, the blond boy billionaire of the children's comics merging horribly and inevitably with the ghost of Howard Hughes.

Even the original packaging of the comic book series reflected this search for pearls of meaning amongst the garbage cans of American myth and culture. Coke cans, calculators and MacDonald's cartons transported the iconography of the comic book cover into realms that owed more to Andy Warhol than Jack Kirby: with one essentially throwaway phenomenon (comic books) masquerading as a series of others. Bear in mind that THE ONE hit the stands months before WATCHMEN or numerous other publications had begun to mess around with the traditions of the comic book cover and marvel afresh at Veitch's ability to second guess even the most unanticipated trends.

In the instinctive and careful manner in which he crafts his stories, as ever toward earlier work is like a master chef endeavored here by the tiny pinch of hot spice added to the mixture in the form of Rick Grimes' "FUZZ FUNDLES". Grimes, a startling and fascinating talent in his own right, contributes here a disturbing series of vignettes that might have sprung directly from Max Fleischer's clammiest, murkiest, most unsettling dreams. I'm not sure why these bewildering, intriguing little nightmares should work so well next to Veitch's totally unrelated superhero saga, and I'm not entirely sure that Rick Veitch ever knew why they would work either. He just knew that they would, and therein resides one of his greatest talents.

THE ONE isn't Rick Veitch's best work. It was the best at it's time of publication but has since been eclipsed by his later endeavours, which is exactly as it should be. Even those later works are not the very best of Rick Veitch: That, I am convinced, is a reassuring distance into the future as yet. THE ONE, however, is a kind of landmark, a pulling together of obsessions and ingenious story-telling ideas into a coherent whole: a setting out of the blueprint upon which Veitch would later build such an impressive body of endeavour. Judged in terms of Rick's evolution as a creative voice, the book in your hands represents a truly significant advance.

Judged against the wider external world of mainstream comics, its significance is by no means diminished. Its revisionist superheroics, while conceived at roughly the same time, predate WATCHMEN and DARK KNIGHT in terms of publication, as does its packaging. Its political and humanist preoccupations were voiced before such sentiments became chic. Its deranged culture-conscious humour offers an alternative and an antidote to today's rather gloomy trend for pessimistic post modern para-humans (Yeah, yeah I know, and I'm really sorry. It all got out of hand.) Whatever it is that the comic books of the 1980's turn out to be remembered for, THE ONE was right there in the thick of it, carving out a niche in the mainstream for dangerous ideas long before dangerous ideas became box-office certainties.

If your looking for a long-distance talent, a rabbit-hen man who can cover the ground and still be creatively fresh at the other end, then you're looking for Rick Veitch.

If you're in search of a graphic story that captures in freeze-frame a turbulent period for both humanbeans and the world at large, then look no further.

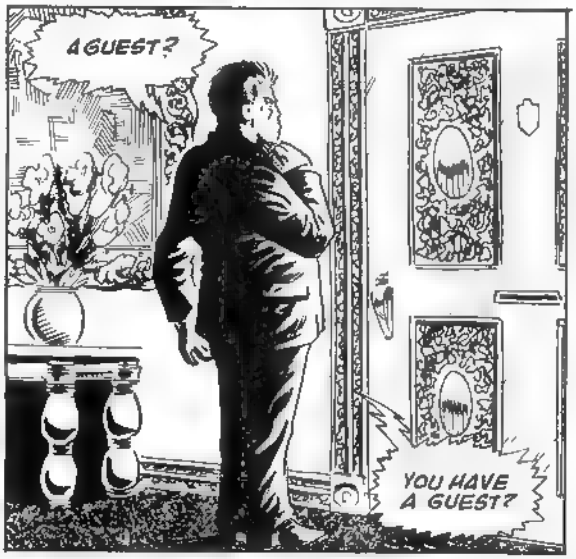
This is the one.

ALAN MOORE
Northampton, 1988.

VERA, MY LITTLE PONY... OPEN UP THE DOOR! YOUR COSSAK IS HERE.
BAM BAM
OH, NOT NOW...
NOT NOW!

MIKHAIL... PLEASE... THIS ISN'T A GOOD TIME. PERHAPS TOMORROW...?
VERA, MY TREASURE... THIS IS THE PERFECT TIME! MY WIFE IS VISITING HER MOTHER IN GORKY.
WE CAN HAVE THE WHOLE NIGHT TOGETHER, JUST YOU AND I...

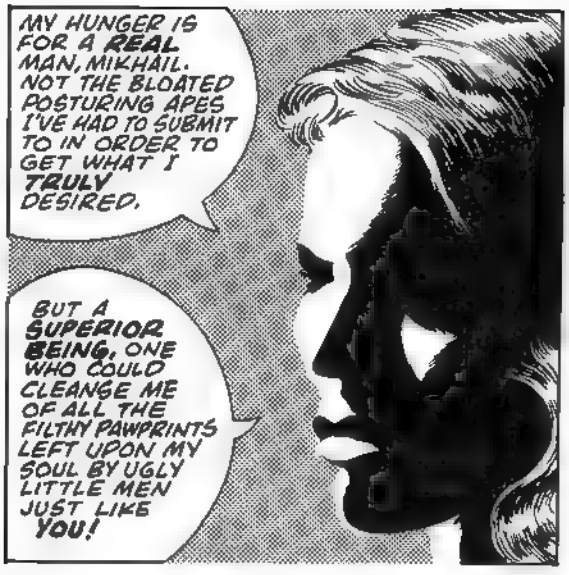
I'M SORRY, MIKHAIL. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE, YOU SEE, I... I HAVE A GUEST.
NOW GOODNIGHT!


A GUEST?
YOU HAVE A GUEST?

AND WHAT GUEST CAN BE MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU THAN ME? WAS IT NOT I WHO SECURED YOUR POST FOR YOU?
AM I NOT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY?
WAS IT NOT I WHO PROVIDED THIS LUXURY APARTMENT? THE VERY BED YOU NOW CAVORT UPON?

KRASH!
THE MOST POWERFUL MAN IN ALL RUSSIA?

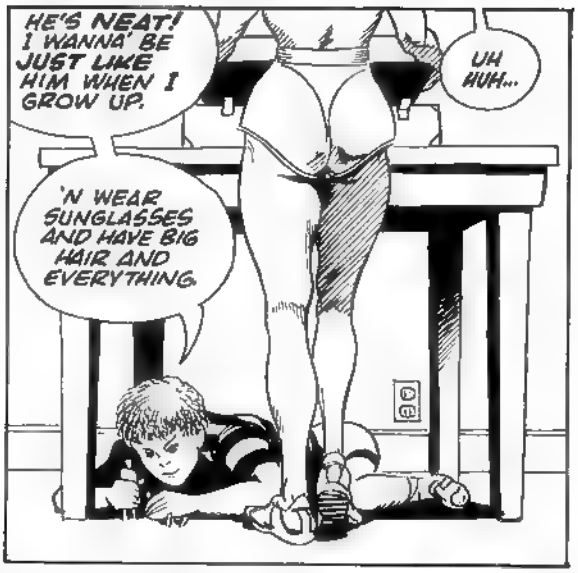
ULP! EXCELLENCY... YOU CATCH ME AT AN AWKWARD MOMENT... I..
I ASSURE YOU, I HAD NO IDEA THAT YOU AND YERA WERE... I MEAN, SHE WAS SO INSISTENT I ACCOMPANY HER HERE TO HER ROOMS. I DID NOT KNOW HOW TO REFUSE.
IT'S ALL RIGHT, BOG. PLEASE WAIT IN THE KITCHEN-- PREMIER KUBALOV AND I HAVE SOMETHING TO DISCUSS IN PRIVATE.
YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO COME BURSTING IN LIKE THIS!
YOU SCHEMING LITTLE FOOL! DO YOU REALIZE THE CHANCE YOU'VE TAKEN? HOW DID YOU GET HIM OUT OF THE PROJECT?
YOU FORGET, MIKHAIL... I RUN THE PROJECT!
AND THIS IS HOW YOU DO IT? BY REMOVING HIM FROM HIS CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR OWN PERSONAL PLEASURE?
MY GOD, WOMAN--IS YOUR HUNGER FOR MEN SO GREAT YOU WOULD ENDANGER THE WHOLE CITY OF MOSCOW?


MY HUNGER IS FOR A REAL MAN, MIKHAIL. NOT THE BLOATED POSTURING APES I'VE HAD TO SUBMIT TO IN ORDER TO GET WHAT I TRULY DESIRED.
BUT A SUPERIOR BEING, ONE WHO COULD CLEANSE ME OF ALL THE FILTHY PAWPRINTS LEFT UPON MY SOUL BY UGLY LITTLE MEN JUST LIKE YOU!

I'LL SEE THAT YOU HANG FOR THIS...
EH?
SLLURP
MUNCH
CRUNCH
KRASH
GREAT LENIN'S GHOST--
HE'S IN THE KITCHEN, WITH ALL THAT FOOD?

SO WE'RE STANDING THERE, LOOKING AT THE ONE. NONE OF US KNOWING WHAT TO THINK AFTER ALL THESE GOINGS ON. HE STARTS TO GET UP... VERY SLOWLY LIKE THERE'S THIS GREAT WEIGHT ON HIS SHOULDERS.
HE SEEMED INFINITELY SAD AND HELPLESS.
HE BEGINS TO TALK. . BUT LIKE TO HIMSELF, AND IT'S MYSTICAL MUMBO-JUMBO. Y'KNOW, LIKE, THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE HIGHER AND LOWER NATURES IN MAN. AND EVOLVING PLANETARY CONSCIOUSNESS AND SIXTIES STUFF LIKE THAT.
AND HE STARTS TO FRET... "TOO SOON," HE CRIES, "THEY CALLED ME TOO SOON!"
HE'S PACING AROUND THE ROOM, GOING ON ABOUT NATURE THROWING HIM A CURVE, AND PEOPLE HAVING TOO MUCH OF A FIXATION ON THE PHYSICAL WORLD. "THE EYES!" HE SAYS. "THE EYES WERE A BIG MISTAKE!"
HE STOPS AND LOOKS AT US WITH HIS GOOFY GRIN. "THERE'S ONLY ONE SOLUTION," HE SAYS.
"THE HUMAN TOUCH!"
AND OUT HE WALKS.

I LOVE THE ONE, MUMMY.
WHEN'S HE COMING BACK?
SOON, DEAR. SOON.


HE'S NEAT! I WANNA' BE JUST LIKE HIM WHEN I GROW UP.
'N WEAR SUNGLASSES AND HAVE BIG HAIR AND EVERYTHING.
UH HUH...

GUESS WHAT? BEFORE HE LEFT HE TOLD ME A BIG SECRET.
THAT'S NICE...
HE SAID NOT TO SHARE IT WITH ANYBODY, BUT I CAN TELL YOU.

HE SAID THAT HE REALLY DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THAT. HE SAID HE'S ONLY PRETENDING.
MM HMM...
AND HE SAID HE COULD FLY!

HE SAID WHEN HE CAME BACK HE WAS GOING TO TAKE ME FLYING TOO!
IS IT OKAY IF I GO FLYING, MUMMY?

OF COURSE, DEAR. IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT.
WHOOOOSH!

BUT WHAT DOES MUMMY. WANT?
OH! JAY-HOLE-- YOU SCARED ME! I-I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO BE UP AND AROUND SO SOON.
YOU'RE LUCKY TO BE ALIVE!

YOU WERE BLEEDING ALL OVER THE PLACE-- HOWLING AND MOANING LIKE A DEMON. I DON'T KNOW HOW THE ONE CURED YOU. YOUR FATHER SAYS HE USED SOME SORT OF FAITH HEALING!
NAAAAHHH! HE JUST PULLED THE SLUG OUT OF ME--IT WAS MY OWN AMAZING RECUPERATIVE POWERS THAT REALLY DID IT!
LOOK-- HARDLY ANY SCAR EVEN..

I LIKE THE WAY YOU WERE CHECKIN' OUT MY MONEY. NEVER SEEN HALF A MILLION BUCKS BEFORE HAVE YA'?
PROBOBLY WONDERIN' IF YOU COULD GET AWAY WITH RIPPIN' ME OFF AND HEADIN' FOR MEXICO, WEREN'T YA'? HEH HEH..
IT'S OKAY.. I UNDERSTAND.
GO AHEAD... TOUCH IT.

RUN YOUR FINGERS OVER 'EM. HOLD A BIG FAT WAD OF IT IN YOUR HAND.
S'JUST HUNKS OF PAPER, THAT'S ALL. BUT IT SURE FEELS LIKE FREEDOM. DON'T IT?
1000
50000

AND THE SMELL... NUTHIN' IN THIS WORLD SMELLS THE SAME AS MONEY. NUTHIN'!
SO RICH... SO POWERFUL... SO DIRTY...
ONE THOUSAND
1000
GOOD OL' MONEY! WHERE WOULD WE BE WITHOUT IT?

ME-- I SPENT MY WHOLE LIFE WITHOUT IT. NOW I'M GONNA' SEE WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BUY EVERY DAMN THING I EVER DESIRED!
GOT ANYTHING FOR SALE?

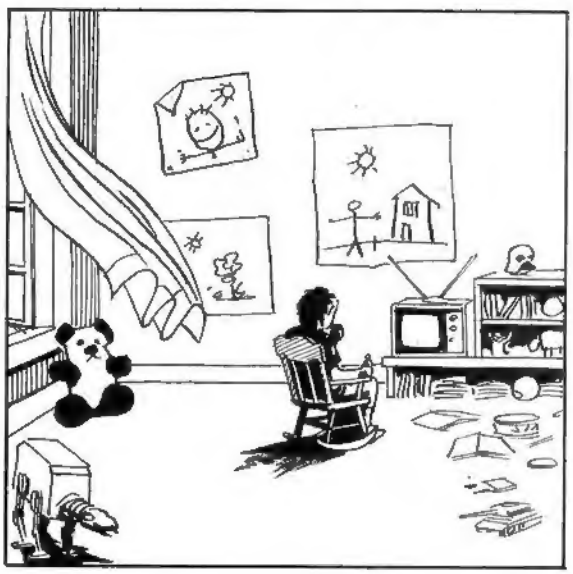
MMM... I MIGHT... AS LONG AS YOU'RE NOT MAD AT ME FOR THOSE THINGS I SAID UP ON THE SKYSCRAPER YESTERDAY. I GUESS I GOT KIND OF FLAKEY WHAT WITH EVERYTHING GOING ON AND ALL?
DEEP DOWN I'VE OFTEN WONDERED WHAT IT'D BE LIKE TO GET TO KNOW YOU BETTER.
THERE'S A COUPLE THINGS I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO FIND OUT ABOUT YOU TOO, EGYPT.

SO WHADDYA' SAY WE GO OUT AND SEE HOW MANY GRINS WE CAN BUY WITH HALF A' MILLION BANANAS?
WELL... MAYBE...

BETTER MAKE YOUR MIND UP QUICK, CUZ I'M LEAVIN' RIGHT NOW!
OKAY! I'M COMING!
HEY, GUDA? WOULD YOU WATCH LARRY FOR ME?
WELL... I GUESS I COULD. WHAT TIME Y'THINK YOU'LL BE BACK?

SLAM!
EGYPT?

OH! THAT GIRL! I'LL NEVER KNOW WHY SHE CHOSE TO BECOME A PARENT!



NEXT:

THE HUMAN TOUCH

AVAILABLE NOW
REPRINTS CEREBUS 52-80
$30.00 plus $2.50 for postage
BOX OF 16 BOOKS $400.00
WE PAY U.P.S. ON ALL BOX ORDERS
Prices quoted in Canadian dollars. VISA and MASTERCARD will bill American customers the equivalent in U.S. funds.
VISA
519-576-7820
or
519-576-0610
9:00 am to 6:00 pm EST.
master charge
or Certified Cheque/Money Order payable to:
AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC.
Box 1674, Station 'C', Kitchener, Ontario N2G 4R2
DAVE SIM
Church
State